

RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN'

activity was both diplomatic and military. With respect to the first, Prince von Reuss, the German Minister to Iran, tried to influence the government and the parliament. He seemed, by 1915, to be nearing a diplomatic triumph. The elections to the Majlis, which were held in that year, gave a majority to the pro-German Democratic party.² This party and the Majlis as a whole strongly protested against the violation of Iranian territory and neutrality by Russian and British troops (although the German-officered Turks were the first to violate this neutrality in the region west of Lake Urumia). The government, though less openly, leaned to the German cause. Mustaufi ul-Mamalek, the Prime Minister, even signed a secret treaty, by which Germany was promised the full support of the Iranian government.⁸ Rumors concerning this alliance and an impending *coup d'etat swept* Teheran in the fall of 1915 and precipitated strong diplomatic intervention by Russian and British ministers. The Iranians were warned as to the possible consequences of such a Germanophile policy. To add weight to her Minister's words Russia was about to order her troops, which were already in occupation of some points in the Caspian provinces, to march on Teheran. Fearful lest the capital be taken by the Russians, the German and Austro-Hungarian legations left and established themselves at Qum. A number of pro-German Iranian politicians headed by Suleiman Mir/a followed them. In Qum under the auspices of Prince von Reuss they created a Committee for the Defense of Islam (otherwise called *Ittihad-i-hlarri*) to rally the patriotic and devout Iranians for the coming struggle against the infidel Russians and British. The

choice of Qum for
headquarters of this movement was an astute political
move, because
of the role the divines of that stronghold of Shiism
played in Iran.
In fact, German propaganda strove persistently to
convince the
Iranians that Germany was the only friend of Islam.
The Kaiser's
visit to Damascus in 1898 was cited as an example of
his warm feel-
ings toward the Moslem world, and his professions
of friendship
were skillfully exploited by German agents. The
Sultan-Caliph's
alliance with the German Emperor added new fuel
to these argu-
ments, and rumors were even circulated that the
Kaiser had accepted

² Nicolson, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
^a Sykes, *op. tit.*, p. 544.